



## Press Clipping Article

**Title:** Business aids aquaculture in the region

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**Writer:** Greg Wells

**Lead:**

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MORGANTOWN — It's called Gone Fishing, and if you don't want to go fishing but still want the goods, it's the place with truly fresh Kentucky catfish, already filleted.

"I don't know of anywhere else you can go and buy fish that was swimming a pond no more than two days ago," said Teresa Lindsey, one of the business's owners.

The venture is a product of a Morgantown couple's desire to improve the aquaculture market in their community, and hopefully make a living.

Even with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's help, through a \$118,500 grant out of Phase I Tobacco Settlement funds, the \$300,000 investment was stepping out on a limb for Lindsey and her husband Bobby.

In a way, the venture is a combination of several businesses under one roof. For one, it is a fish and shrimp processing business that purchases locally grown "raw materials."

They are licensed to sell not just wholesale to restaurants and groceries, but also to the public from their 3319 Bowling Green Road location in Morgantown.

"We have a fish and seafood market that provides Gulf shrimp, snow crab legs, talapia and a variety of other items that complement our Kentucky-raised items," Lindsey said.

In addition to importing ocean products, Lindsey said, the retail operation is soon to add custom steaming of the seafood for a drop-in lunch or for a take-home party feast.

The operation has started out meeting federal rules that aren't even in effect yet from the Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, said Ruth Pike, USDA resource conservation and development coordinator for this area.

"When someone purchases the Lindseys' products they know they are safe," she said.

"They have done everything right. I talked with their (FDA) inspector last week and he is

very pleased.”

Pike said she has been working with the couple since they started looking into starting the business, helping them understand what it would take to pass the stringent inspections that are needed to process and sell the food they do.

Lindsey said the help from Pike and Kentucky State University aquaculture specialist Bill Wurts has been invaluable as they worked to develop their business, which opened April 22.

“Bill has helped me with this since it was just an idea,” Lindsey said.

“I appreciate the praise,” Wurts said. “I hope I’m deserving.”

He said the Lindseys’ business is the kind that is necessary to make aquaculture profitable in the short term in the commonwealth. They integrate several layers of profit-making activity that relate to their core business.

With the influx of lots of inexpensive frozen catfish from Vietnam and the dominance of Mississippi in the domestic market, the burgeoning Kentucky aquaculture businesses are hard pressed to make themselves profitable.

David Carroll, a local farmer who raises catfish, already knows the business has been filleting for the public, .

“I raised tobacco until last year,” Carroll said. “They’ve got the buyout in now, and I don’t guess anyone is going to be raising tobacco now unless you’ve got a contract. It would be nice if this will replace tobacco.”

He said right now wholesale prices are lower than he’d like to see, but he’s mostly been raising the fish as a hobby in the past. Part of the reason for that is there never had been a good market for them.

“It would be nice if they keep going,” Carroll said. “I hope it (Gone Fishing) goes over all right. I’ve sold them some to get started on, and I’m hoping the price will improve as the market improves.”

Carroll’s operation, six ponds with a low concentration of fish per cubic foot, is in line with the type Wurts said is the most likely to succeed by keeping things simple. He said the high-concentration, high-tech operations like those of more established businesses in other states require lots of labor, monitoring and money to keep from ending up with a pond packed with dead fish.

Pike said one of the resources in the area that helps is the Butler County Aquaculture Industry Team. She said it has a real potential to help farmers develop some other income.

She explained that BAIT is trying to educate those interested on the water quality needs as well as fish species and health guidelines that will help farmers become profitable.

“The loss of tobacco is going to hurt Kentucky farmers,” Pike said. Aquaculture is one of

the ways farmers could regain some of the income lost as tobacco farming changes.

“It is one of President Bush’s priorities to promote aquaculture in the U.S.,” Pike added.

She said people want to eat more local food given the world we live in today. Pike said the government is developing a food source tagging system, in response to fears of terrorism and food safety issues such as mad cow disease.

With a demand for local farm products increasing, Gone Fishing is in a good position to succeed, Pike said, which is of course what Lindsey is hoping.

“It’s a little slow, but very encouraging,” Lindsey said. “We’re getting good feedback and return customers.”

She said the market will have fresh Kentucky prawns in September. She said that, like peaches, the shrimp are a seasonal product in Kentucky.

Gone Fishing is open to the public from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Its telephone number is (270) 526-3612, which is also one way to reach BAIT for aquaculture meeting information.

“If anybody can make money with it I think they will,” Wurts said. “They have the kind of energy it will take.”

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[Previous Page](#) [Return to Search](#)

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